

CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS: A CASE STUDY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the social and cultural contexts of pedagogical practices in selected Australian university Korean language programs. The focus of the empirical work reported in this thesis is the description and interpretation of the social activities constructed by categories of students, defined by their cultural background, and native Korean-speaking lecturers in goal-oriented pedagogies. The empirical work centres on the interaction between perceptions of teachers' expectations on the part of students and on the cultural attributes of their teachers. In order to accomplish this outcome, the thesis draws on the concepts of social interactionism formulated by symbolic interactionism and the school classroom analyses of Hargreaves (1972) and Nash (1979). These concepts are embedded in the theoretical framework of 'visible' and 'invisible' pedagogies first formulated by Bernstein (1973, 1990).

The empirical work, undertaken in two fieldwork periods in two Australian universities during 1998 and 1999, made use of formal and informal interviewing and observation to generate a data-base. A questionnaire survey of students was conducted near the end of the second fieldwork period, and replicated in 2002, to corroborate the qualitative data-based interpretations.

The main finding is that the interaction of the cultural backgrounds of students and teachers constantly affect classroom interaction in the Korean language classroom. The cultural framing of classroom life has special significance for Korean-background students who perceive that they are expected to perform

constantly at a high level by their Korean teachers. Conversely, Australian students, while they evaluate their teachers positively, react to a perceived lack of high expectation on the part of their Korean teachers. Nevertheless, Australian students perceive that they receive positive expectations from their Korean teachers. In theoretical terms, the study provides evidence that the classroom interaction models proposed by Hargreaves and Bernstein in the schools sector have salience in higher education. Moreover, the fieldwork shows that while there is an identifiable classroom pressure to reach defined learning outcomes predicted by the 'visible' pedagogy model, there are culturally-based criteria used by teachers for judging the performance of students. This 'invisible' pedagogy affects the motivation of students in the observed classrooms so that the Korean background students and other Asian students perceive the classroom to be flexible yet demanding, while Australian students perceive it to be easy-going yet challenging. In short, the research demonstrates that Korean language teachers display logical expectations of productivity and standards through culturally desired expectations.

This thesis is the first study of social interaction in an Australian Asian language teaching setting. There is sufficient evidence in the thesis to suggest that there is a productive future research agenda in the analysis of the effects of expectations and consequential levels of motivation and language competency of Asian language learners in Australian universities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
 CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	
Background to the Research and Nature of the Study	1
Humans' basic social relation patterns	7
Communication between teacher and students	11
Miscommunication and pedagogy	13
Cultural diversity in current classrooms	16
Statement of the problem	21
Limitation of the study	22
Definition of Key Terms	22
Overview of the dissertation	26
 CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	28
Motivation of students	28
Teacher expectations and student future academic performances	32
Native Korean teacher expectations of students in Korea	49
Interactions in the classroom	52
Cultural diversity in classrooms	57
Visible and invisible culture	61
Culture, pedagogy and teachers	64
Cultural differences between teacher and students	66
School culture and school effects	72
Korean culture and values	75
 CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
Introduction	83
Social interactions and pedagogy	83
Theory of visible and invisible pedagogies	88
Symbolic interactionism and classrooms	95
 CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODS	
Introduction	106
Justification of symbolic interactionism	106
Research processing	111
Data processing	119
Quantitative methods	123
Description of the research sites and subjects	125
Background of Asian language education & Korean program settings	127
Research sites	129
Descriptions of language courses	131

Selection of subjects (teachers)	132
Selection of subjects (students)	134
Limitations	140
 CHAPTER V: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
Introduction	142
Part One: The evidence for the existence of pedagogic discourse	143
The social context: the Korean teachers beliefs in Korean language teaching in Australia	143
Perceptions and expectations of students' performances by the Korean teachers	147
Culturally diverse classrooms	151
Cultural differences between Korean teachers and Australian students in classrooms	162
Part Two: Perceptions and expectations about teachers by students	165
Students' perceptions of Korean teachers' expectations towards Korean background students	165
Non-Korean background students' perceptions of Korean teachers' expectations	178
Students' perceptions of Korean teachers' high/low/positive/negative expectations	181
Students' perceptions differences between the Korean, Australian and other Asian teachers' expectations	185
Students' self-expectations of their Korean language studies	195
Students' perceptions of the significance of teacher expectations	210
Part three: Survey results	204
 CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH	
Introduction	207
Discussion of the findings	208
Summary	226
Suggestions for further research	227
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	229
 APPENDIX A: Survey question for students in 2002	266
APPENDIX B: Students survey database in 2002	271
APPENDIX C: Personal detail of informants (students)	285
APPENDIX D: Interview questions	288
APPENDIX E: A sample of interview script with students	293
APPENDIX F: Summary of Korean foreign language teaching methods	300

List of Tables and Figures

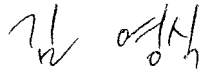
Table 1:Effects of expectations of success or failure on motivation to achieve	37
Table 2:Percentages of teachers...for various aspects of teaching	71
Table 3:Cultural differences between Europe and the USA and Korea	78
Table 4:Korean language program enrolments at Universities X and Y	132
Table 5:Backgrounds of students in Korean language at University X	138
Table 6:The personal background of the Korean teachers in this study	143
Table 7:A comparison of the perceptions of students between Teacher A & B	148
Table 8:Students' responses about teacher expectations of students	185
Figure 1:Network of expectations	60
Figure 2:Pedagogic relationships in the Korean language classrooms	92
Figure 3:Different concept of self-understanding between native Korean	104
Teachers and students in Korean foreign language classrooms in Australia	

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DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this thesis is completely original, except where acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted for a degree at this or any other University. I have personally sighted all works referred to in the text and references.



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